

Is Your Bounce Rate Too High?

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This is the second post in a series exploring Google Analytics on the InsideOut Solutions blog. You can read more posts in this series at www.insideout.com/blog/category/seo/google-analytics.

WHAT IS A BOUNCE RATE, ANYWAY?

When a person visits your site and looks at only one page, we say that person "bounced" away. Your site's bounce rate is the percentage of visitors who bounce.

For example, George searches for "Sequim, Washington B&B" on Google and sees Sample Inn in the search results. He clicks the link, glances over Sample Inn's home page, decides he'd rather stay elsewhere, and clicks his browser's back button to return to the search results in order to look for a more appealing inn. George "bounced" away from Sample Inn, raising Sample Inn's bounce rate.

Visitors also bounce when, on the first page of your site they see, they click a link to a different site. For example, Diana browses BedandBreakfast.com and finds Sample Inn's listing. She clicks the link to Sample Inn's website, where she sees the TripAdvisor logo on the home page. She clicks the link to look at Sample Inn's reviews, but gets distracted by listings for other area B&Bs on TripAdvisor and never returns to Sample Inn. Diana also contributes a bounce.

A bounce is also counted when a visitor visits one page on your site, then stops browsing the internet entirely. For example, Charlie wants to make a reservation at Sample Inn. He already has the site bookmarked, so he goes directly to the site and looks for the innkeeper's phone number at the bottom of the page. He calls the inn, asks

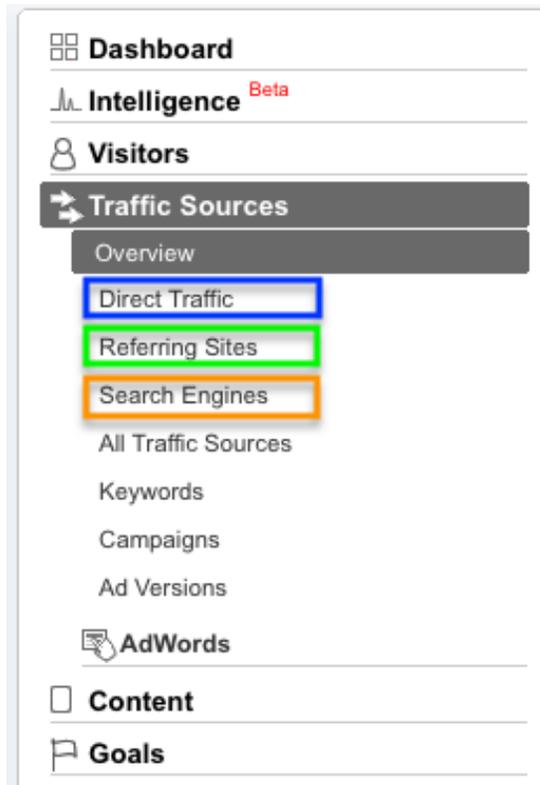


When is your bounce rate too high?

Photo credit: Maia C

(flickr.com/photos/maiac/3637259970/)

a few questions, and makes a reservation. While he plans his getaway, he forgets about his computer, which continues to show Sample Inn's home page for the next hour before it automatically shuts down. Charlie, too, contributes a bounce--even though he booked a room--because he only looked at one page.



When investigating your bounce rate, check the bounce rate for each traffic source separately.

WHEN IS MY BOUNCE RATE TOO HIGH?

When looking at bounce rates, keep in mind that there are many reasons for visitors to bounce. Sometimes a high bounce rate indicates that your website has room for improvement (as in George's and Diana's cases), and sometimes it indicates that your site is functioning exactly as it should (as in Charlie's case).

Note, too, that your bounce rate does not affect your site's placement in search results. Google Search does not have access to Google Analytics, so your site will not be penalized in search results for a high bounce rate.

To sort out acceptable bounces from harmful ones, it's best to look at each traffic source separately. As mentioned previously in the [Understanding Google Analytics](#) post, you can divide your visitors into three groups, depending on how they found your site: direct traffic, referral traffic, and search traffic.

To see the bounce rate for each of these traffic sources in Analytics, click "Traffic Sources" in the left sidebar menu.

Direct Traffic Bounce Rate

Be least concerned with the bounce rate from direct traffic. These visitors might contribute bounces by checking one page for your phone number, directions, or current specials. A high bounce rate here isn't concerning.

Referring Site Bounce Rate

Expect a relatively low bounce rate from referring-site traffic, generally around 20-25%. These visitors are actively exploring lodging options, so they are inclined to browse through your site to get to know your property, check rates, and look over packages.



Expect a low bounce rate from referral traffic.

Note that if you see your own inn or your booking engine listed as a referring site, the bounce rate will be artificially high. This is a sign either that Analytics hasn't been properly set up to track visits to your booking pages, or that your booking engine doesn't allow Analytics tracking. Contact your booking engine to ask whether Analytics can be set up on your booking pages.

Source	None	Visits	Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate
webervations.com		742	2.76	00:02:44	71.70%	45.55%

If Analytics isn't properly tracking visits to your booking engine, your referring-site bounce rate will be artificially high.

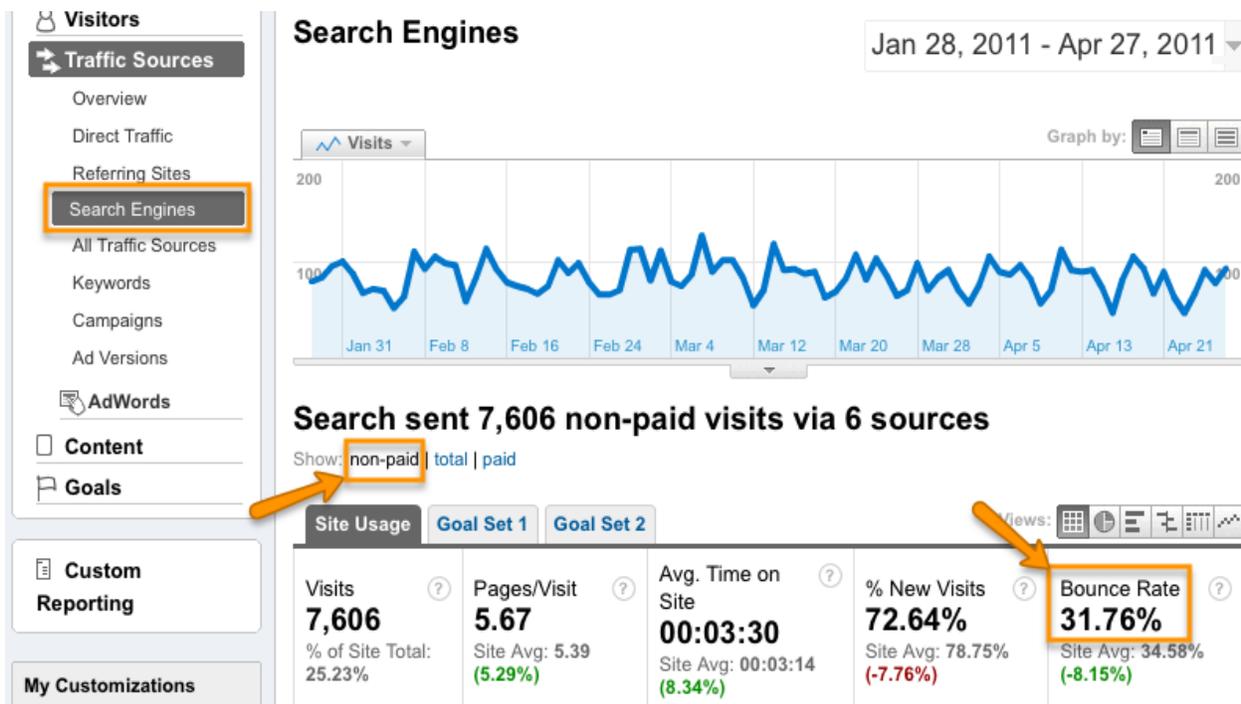
Search-Traffic Bounce Rate

Expect a somewhat higher bounce rate from search traffic, around 30-35%. These visitors may be looking for lodging, or they may be searching for events in your area or for cranberry scone recipes, so some visitors are more likely to bounce than others. Several factors affect your overall search bounce rate.

Do you use AdWords paid advertising? Check the bounce rates of paid search traffic separately from organic (non-paid) search traffic. If your ads lead to bounces, rethink your advertising strategies. If organic search traffic produces bounces, investigate which keywords trigger the most bounces.

Do you blog? Your blog will likely show a higher bounce rate than your main site. Blog readers may only read one post before bouncing away to browse other blogs, and this is okay. If you give your readers useful information, they will return to read future posts and will consider your inn when making future lodging decisions. An acceptable bounce rate for a site with an active blog can be as high as 40%.

Stay tuned for the next post in the [Google Analytics for Innkeepers](#) series, which will show you how to use filters to see only the statistics for people who read your blog.



Blog posts and paid advertising can affect your search-traffic bounce rate.

Remember, not all bounces are disastrous. To decide whether your own bounce rate is too high, Google Analytics gives you powerful insights into who bounces and why.